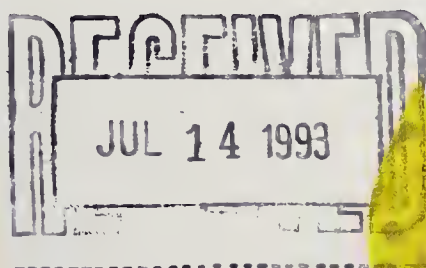


LEO LIONNI
AT THE
LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS



PS3562
.J567Z75
1993



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/leolionniatlibra0000unse>

LC 1.7 : 155

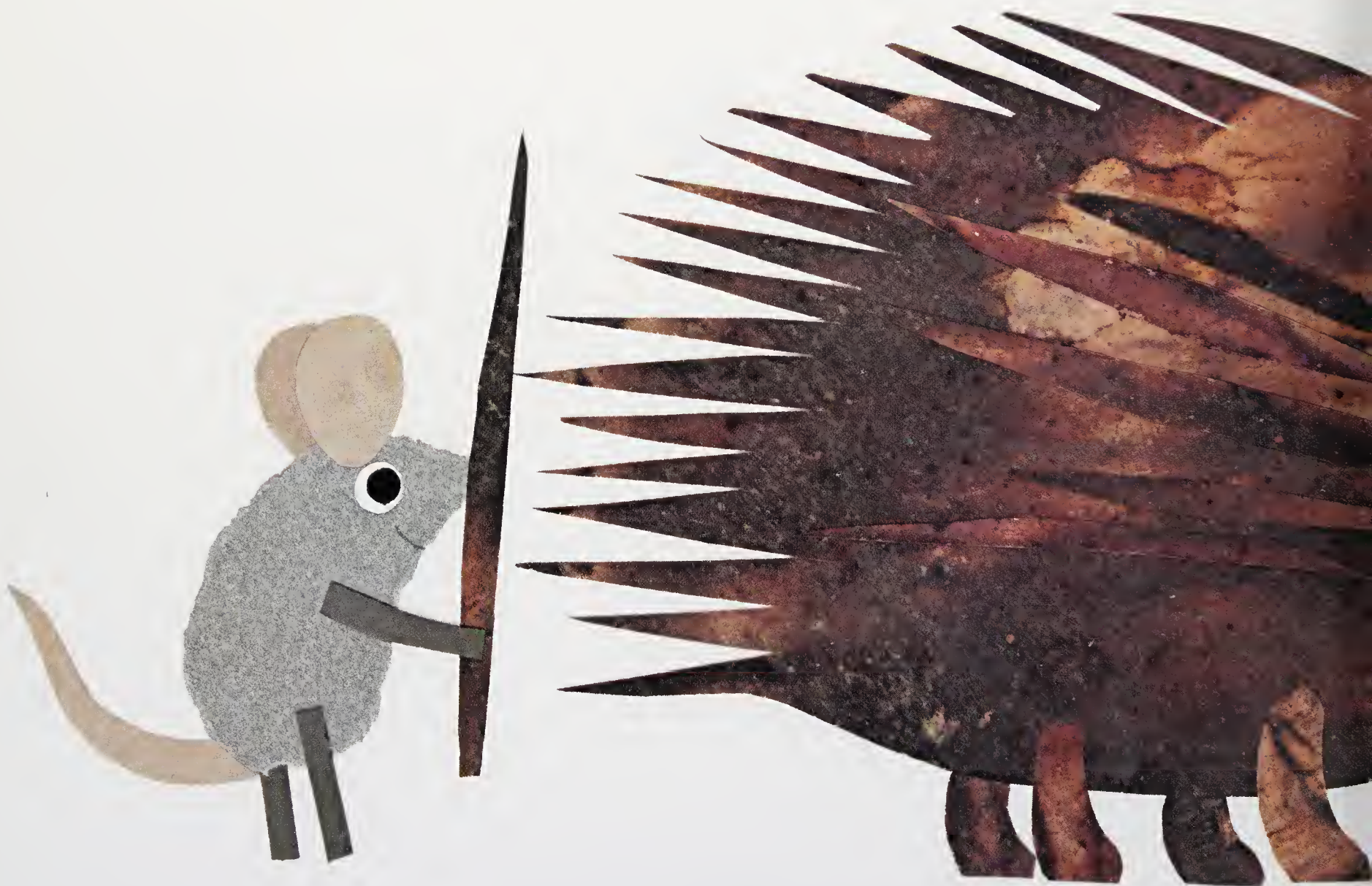


Leo Lionni at the Library of Congress

Joseph F. Smith Library
Brigham Young University-Hawaii

.C786

LEO LIONNI AT



PS3562
I567275
1993

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Edited by SYBILLE A. JAGUSCH

Children's Literature Center

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS • WASHINGTON • 1993

Children's Literature Center Lecture Series, no. 2

An International Children's Book Day lecture
sponsored by the Children's Literature Center
with a grant from the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation

PRESENTED ON MAY 12, 1988

This publication is supported by a gift from Alfred A. Knopf,
a division of Random House, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Leo Lionni at the Library of Congress : a lecture for International
Children's Book Day, presented on May 12, 1988 / edited by Sybille
A. Jagusch.

p. cm.

"Children's Literature Center lecture series, no. 2"

"An International Children's Book Day lecture sponsored by the
Children's Literature Center with a grant from the Ezra Jack Keats
Foundation."

ISBN 0-8444-0723-2

— Copy 3 Z663.121 .L46 1992

I. Lionni, Leo, 1910- — Authorship. 2. Children's stories —
Authorship. I. Lionni, Leo, 1910- . II. Jagusch, Sybille A.
III. Children's Literature Center (Library of Congress) IV. Title:
Children's Literature Center lecture series.

PS3562.L567Z75 1992

813'.54 — dc20

91-40921
CIP

Illustrations copyright © Leo Lionni.
Used here by permission of
Alfred A. Knopf and Pantheon Books,
a division of Random House, Inc.

THIS BOOK IS PRINTED ON ACID-FREE PAPER.



From Ezra Jack Keats, *The Snowy Day* (New York: Viking, 1962).
Copyright © 1962 by Ezra Jack Keats.

Contents

Foreword	<i>Sybille A. Jagusch</i>	7
ME as in Mouse	<i>Leo Lionni</i>	9
Leo Lionni: Many Things to Many People	<i>Steven Heller</i>	19
Selective Bibliography: Books by Leo Lionni		26





Foreword

The Children's Literature Center in the Library of Congress provides information about children's books, recommends materials to add to the Library's vast collections, organizes symposia and lectures, publishes information on children's books, such as its annual list *Books for Children*, and keeps in touch and represents the Library of Congress with like-minded organizations all over the world.

There is yet another function, and one which the Children's Literature Center performs with great pleasure: the center honors and celebrates the creativity and joy of children's books and draws attention to those who create them. From the beginning of my tenure at the Library of Congress, I had hoped to initiate a program which would honor artists who have brought to America the designs and colors of another culture.

My opportunity came three years ago when the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation generously offered to provide funds to support a new program. I decided happily to do something that would focus attention on International Children's Book Day, which is celebrated annually by some fifty member countries of the International Board of Books for Young People in recognition of Hans Christian Andersen's birthday.

We decided to begin our international series in 1987 by honoring Denmark and one of its fine Andersen interpreters, Erik Blegvad. The joyful evening and Mr. Blegvad's presentation were captured in the center's publication *Hans Christian Andersen: From an Artist's Point of View* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1988).

I was pleased that Leo Lionni accepted our invitation to be our second guest of honor. The celebration took place on the evening of May 12, 1988. Mr. Lionni was warmly received by an appreciative audience of children's book and art enthusiasts. All knew his picture books and their heroes well. They knew what was meant by the understated title "*ME* as in Mouse," which Mr. Lionni chose for his presentation. They knew there is a piece of himself in each of his now classic characters, be it Frederick, Swimmy, the Inchworm, or Little Blue and Little Yellow.

Mr. Lionni's artistic life spans many phases of creativity. A truly international man, rooted in the traditions of Holland, the country of his birth, and shaped by the political and artistic movements of Italy, he was challenged by the eclectic culture of America, the country that brought him to the top of the competitive world of graphic design.

It is with pleasure that I introduce Mr. Lionni's essay as the second in our "International Picture Book Collection."

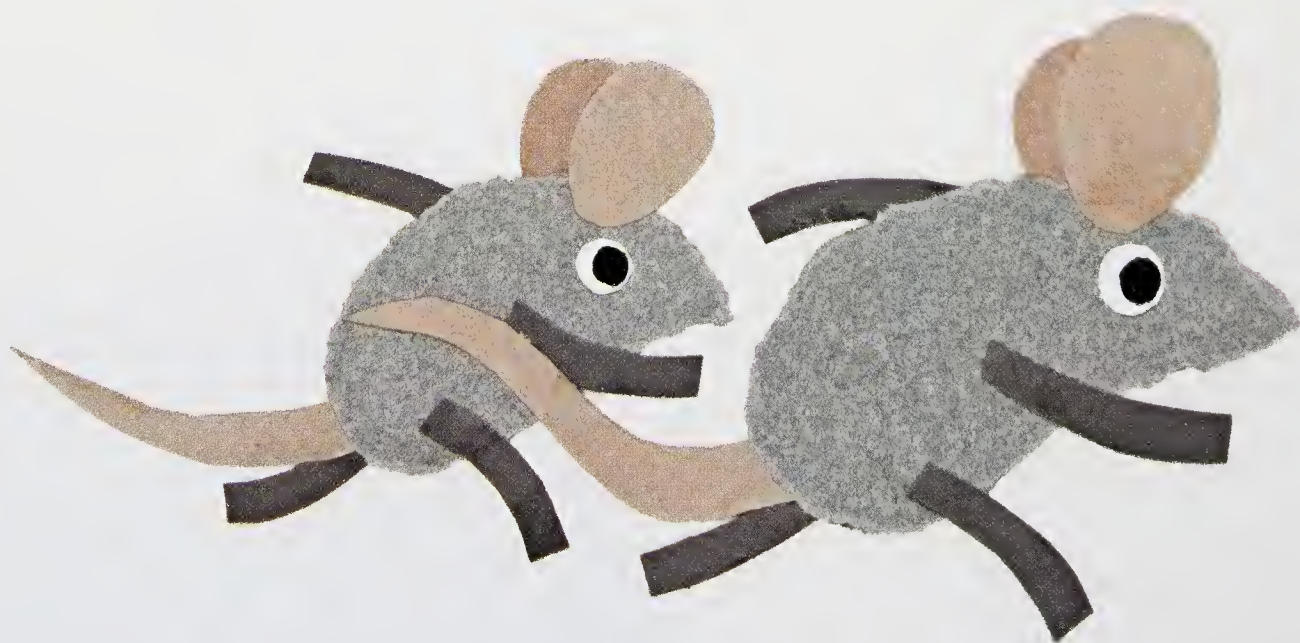
I am pleased to gratefully acknowledge the thoughtful introduction by Mr. Steven Heller, senior art director of the *New York Times*, who has previously written about Mr. Lionni, and who interviewed him again for this article.

I would like to thank Frances Foster for her editorial assistance and Alfred Knopf, Inc., for the financial support of this publication.

My appreciation also is expressed to Dr. Martin Pope, president of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, which has made our International Children's Book Day celebrations possible. We are looking forward to future celebrations, which in the spirit of Ezra Jack Keats will celebrate the creativity and joy of children's books.

SYBILLE A. JAGUSCH

*Chief, Children's Literature Center
Library of Congress*



LEO LIONNI

As I stand here before you as an official guest of honor of the Children's Literature Center of the Library of Congress to help celebrate International Children's Book Day, I must confess that I always feel somewhat embarrassed when I am introduced as a children's book author. Not because I consider the making of picture books a minor art form and would prefer my name to be associated with more ponderous activities in the field of Art. Nor because I made my first book at the ripe old age of fifty. Nor because it happened as casually as it did.

My reluctance probably has its origin in my early childhood, when my first defiant answer to the question "What do you want to be when you grow up?" was "The bell of the trolley car." A few years later, and somewhat wiser, I came up with a more reasonable response: "I want to be an artist." That would still be my answer today.

At the time, we lived in Amsterdam, just a few steps from two of the most wonderful museums of the world, the Rijksmuseum and the Stedelijk. There I spent many a Sunday drawing from plaster casts of Greek sculptures and looking with awe not only at the paintings and drawings of Rembrandt and Velasquez but also at the abstract works of Mondriaan and Klee.



And then there were the copyists, with their gray smocks soiled with paint, an open paintbox at their feet, a palette in the left hand and a delicate brush in the other. Breathless, I would watch them as they moved slowly in front of their easels, performing, almost invisibly, stroke by stroke, the magic of duplication. They were the first real painters I had ever seen. It is surely from them that I learned to love the velvety scent of linseed oil and Venice turpentine, and to cock my head when weighing the success or failure of a touch of burnt umber. It was probably then, as I stood there spellbound, and like the artist, unaware of the people around me, that I discovered the creative delights of craftsmanship, and the pleasure of recognizing the solidity of one's lonely self in the midst of a crowd.

I learned about design by helping my Uncle Piet, who was a young architect, with menial drafting tasks. And at home I would listen, whether I wanted to or not, to my mother, an extraordinary soprano, practice a Mozart aria or a Schubert lied. Painting, sculpture, architecture, design, and music, old and new, all came under the same heading: Art. And I wanted to be an artist.

Today, as then, I am involved in all the arts. I paint, I sculpt, I design. I write. Much of it to the sound of Mozart and Schubert. What tempts, excites, and motivates me is the underlying unity of the arts, their many surprising connections and cross-references, and the central poetic charge they share.



Such an eclectic attitude may well seem to be dispersive. And indeed I sometimes wonder if it would not have been better to devote all my time and energies to one well-defined profession. But in retrospect I am happy to have lived so intensely my adventure with all the arts. Not to claim the status of a “real professional” in any one endeavor has been a small price to pay for the many benefits and pleasures of trespassing.

It now seems strange to me that my incursion into the open, sunny field of children’s books happened when it did, late in life, for no art form benefits as much from the total experience in the arts as the picture book. No wonder that when I entered the field I knew that I was walking on familiar ground.

It happened in a most casual manner on a crowded commuter train from New York, where I worked, to Greenwich, Connecticut, where we lived. With me were my two restless grandchildren Annie and Pippo, who had come to spend the weekend with us. To keep them quiet and well behaved was not an easy job. After all the strategies of reasonable persuasion had failed, I had an idea. From the ad pages of *Life* magazine I tore a few small pieces of colored paper and improvised a story — the adventures of two round blobs of color, one blue, the other yellow, who were inseparable friends and who, when they embraced, became green. The children were glued to their seats, and after the happy end I had to start all over again. That evening at home I made a rough dummy.

My friend Fabio Coen, then children’s book editor for Obolensky, Inc., saw *Little Blue and Little Yellow* when he came for dinner at our house the very next day, and decided then and there to have it published.

I had been lucky. The story had run smoothly out of my mind, as if it had been secretly maturing there for a long time. This happens often, I understand, with an “opera prima.” It embodied many of the visual ideas I had been toying with throughout the years, such as the psychological implications of positioning images in space, and the flow of visual tensions that results from the way images are moved from page to page. The story was born complete, with a beginning, a development, a crisis, and a happy ending. And although I wasn’t quite conscious of it at the time, it was a perfect metaphor for a child’s search for identity. Making children’s books was as easy as child’s play.

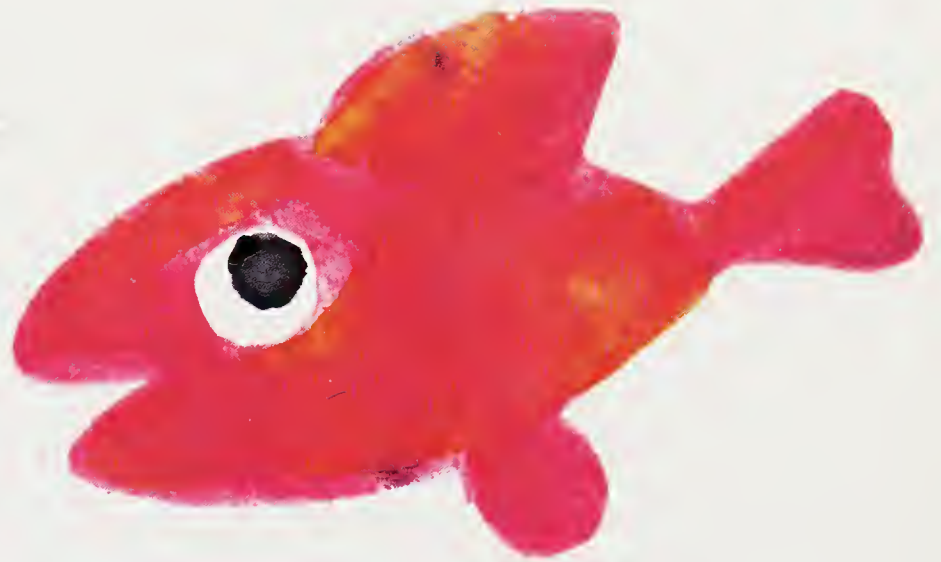
That was thirty years ago. Now Annie, an architect, is expecting a baby, and Pippo is a graphic designer in Paris. And I have just given birth to my thirtieth picture book.

Because of the instant success of *Little Blue and Little Yellow*, I expected Fabio to ask me to make another book, and I was enthusiastic when indeed he did. But when I sat down at my desk, I could produce no more than meaningless doodles. I began to toy with a "Little Blue Goes to the Zoo," but soon the crippling realization came to me that the very uniqueness of my first book precluded a sequel. Whatever I could think of had the flavor of a stale leftover. As I considered my options, it became clear that a new book would have to be totally different in theme, style, and technique. After much creative turmoil, I finally produced *On My Beach There Are Many Pebbles*.

On My Beach was different, all right. The illustrations were realistic pencil drawings of invented pebbles (letterpebbles, fishpebbles, peoplepebbles) that lay hidden among "real" pebbles on a beach. It had no story, not even the hint of a plot, let alone a metaphor. It was an elegant coffee-table book for children. I still consider it with pride to be one of my handsomest achievements, but it has little connection with the many books that were to characterize my career as an author of fables. Perhaps it wasn't a children's book at all.

In a way my third book, *Inch by Inch*, turned out to be my first, for unlike *Little Blue* and *On My Beach* it seems to have embodied all the qualities I later demanded of my work. It is a short animal fable told in words and images that are clear, simple, and memorable; it has a well-defined stylistic coherence between text and illustrations; its tone is light and humorous; and although it doesn't have an explicit moral, it invites search for meaning. I know that this is much to ask for, and in looking back at the body of my work I realize that perhaps I have failed more often than I have succeeded. It now is also increasingly clear to me that what characterized *Inch by Inch* was the simplicity and the strength of the *idea* that generated it. And it has become clear that making illustrated fables is *not* child's play.





What prompted me to invent this fable of an inchworm and a nightingale? Where did the idea come from? Did it come from the distant memories of my early youth in Amsterdam, when, on my way home from school through the Vondelpark, armed with an empty marmalade jar, I would collect woolly caterpillars (those most mysterious of insects) and later, spellbound, watch them weave their white cocoons? Or was it the nightingale that graced our Greenwich garden with the intricacies of its silver song while I was struggling with an idea for my next book? Or was I simply obeying a sudden, irrepressible urge to paint birds and foliage?

Where *do* ideas come from? Authors of children's books well know how frequently the question is asked. It implies the naive assumption that authors have the key to a bottomless reservoir of stories as yet untold, and that they possess a highly specialized mechanism to retrieve them.

Nothing could be further from the truth. To trap the incredibly complex mental process that shapes the development of a story from birth to full-fledged maturity is a hopeless task. As it moves forward from word to word, from image to image, from page to page, a story leaves but the vaguest traces of its tortuous itinerary, and at the end the glowing, solid reality of the finished work all but obliterates the long travail that brought it to its satisfying conclusion. Time and again have I tried to identify the thoughts, feelings, or events that triggered an "idea" into being. Of my thirty books, I have succeeded in tracing but a few to the possible circumstances of their birth. *Frederick*, *Swimmy*, and *Cornelius* are among these exceptions. They show how fortuitous and fragile those circumstances are, and how difficult it is to answer the question "Where do you get your ideas, Mr. Lionni?"



In the early sixties we were living in the hills above the small resort town of Lavagna on the Italian Riviera. The house, a pink stuccoed cube typical of the area, sat in the midst of terraced vineyards and dense olive groves, and from the windows the view embraced the spectacular Tigullio Bay with Sestri Levante to the east and Portofino to the west.

The studio was an adjacent reconverted barn. One sunny afternoon, on my way to work, I found myself face-to-face (or foot-to-face) with a very frightened little field mouse. When it saw me, it froze on its tiny feet. Then it jumped up and darted into the geraniums that flanked the flagstone path.

It was a warm day. The air was filled with the heavy scent of magnolias and orange blossoms and the monotonous sound of crickets. Far below in the hazy sunlight the ocean quivered slightly. I decided to take a nap.

As I lay on my couch, my thoughts began to meander in ever-widening circles. I woke up an hour or so later from a heavy sleep, incapable of moving. As I lay there motionless on my side, my eyes wandered along the shelves of my studio, which were filled not only with books but with hundreds of objects I had collected on my travels around the world. "How much nonsense," I thought. And I found myself saying (I still remember the words), "Once upon a time there was a little field mouse. All the other mice gathered nuts and berries for the winter ahead, while he collected pebbles. 'Why do you collect pebbles?' the others asked, annoyed. 'You never know. They may come in handy some day,' he answered mysteriously."

When I got up, I went about my business without giving that fantasy or my encounter with the mouse another thought. But I remembered them a few weeks later when I began working on the story of *Frederick*, which then seemed to have appeared from nowhere.

Way back in the early fifties we spent a month in Menemshah on Martha's Vineyard. One day I stood on a mooring in the little harbor waiting for a friend to pick me up with his boat when in the water below I saw a school of glittering minnows idly moving about. Suddenly, there was the roar of an outboard motor. Closing ranks, the minnows swiftly swerved around and like one big fish disappeared in the dark of the deeper water. They reappeared several years later at the surface of my memory as *Swimmy* and his friends.

Cornelius was born from a doodle I drew during a long and tedious telephone conversation. It is not surprising that it should have been the drawing of a lizard, because our garden is inhabited by hundreds of the playful little animals, who congregate in the warm hours of the day on the flagstones of the path to my studio. Absentmindedly, as I listened and talked, I drew one. It was standing on its hind legs like a miniature dinosaur. Without knowing why, I added a zigzag line to its back, and then when I finished the call, I threw the doodle into the wastepaper basket. But almost immediately I retrieved it, smoothed the wrinkles, and looked at it, letting my thoughts wander. Again, as with *Frederick*, words came to my mind, this time a title: "The Crocodile Who Walked Upright." It later became "Richard, the Upright Crocodile" and still later, when the text had been written, and the pictures drawn, simply *Cornelius*.



It would be nice to know how the little mouse on the path to my studio began collecting pebbles and later became Frederick, a poet who collects sunrays, colors, and words; how a school of fish became the friends of Swimmy, a political idealist; and how the doodle of a lizard grew into Cornelius, a crocodile who saw and changed the world because he walked upright. For better or for worse, the steps and leaps of the imagination escape the mechanics of our memory and our understanding. The little we *do* know is that somehow in the flow of thoughts that endlessly fill our minds, the artist learns to recognize, capture, and remember that which is useful to his purpose.

Now you may ask yourself why I titled this talk "*ME* as in Mouse?" The answer is simple: I wanted to stress the point that like all fiction, illustrated children's books are inevitably autobiography.

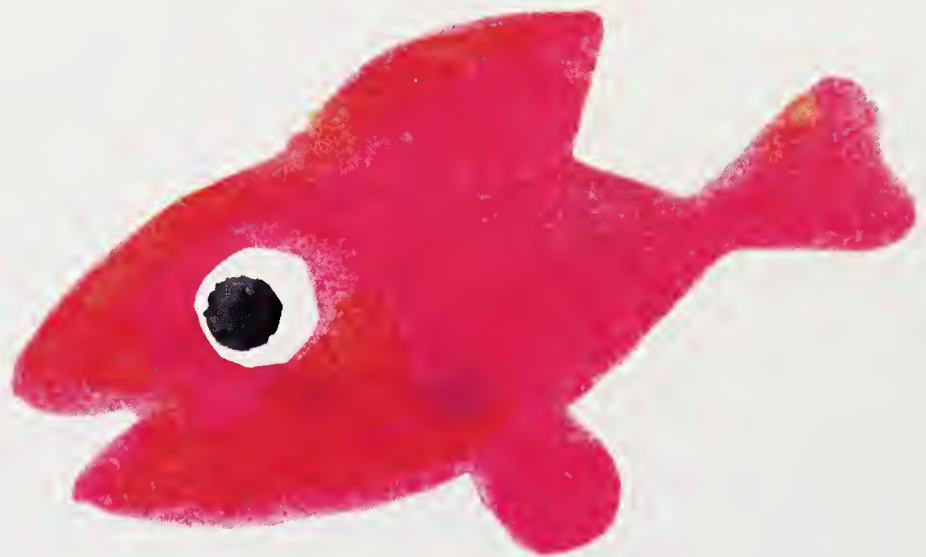
I have mentioned some minor incidents of my own life that have triggered the ideas for my fables. What I did not mention is the fact that without delving deep into the distant memories of their own childhoods, authors could not find the mood, the tone, the imagery that characterize their books. They could not create convincing protagonists were they not able to fully identify with their heroes, a quality they inherit from their early youth.



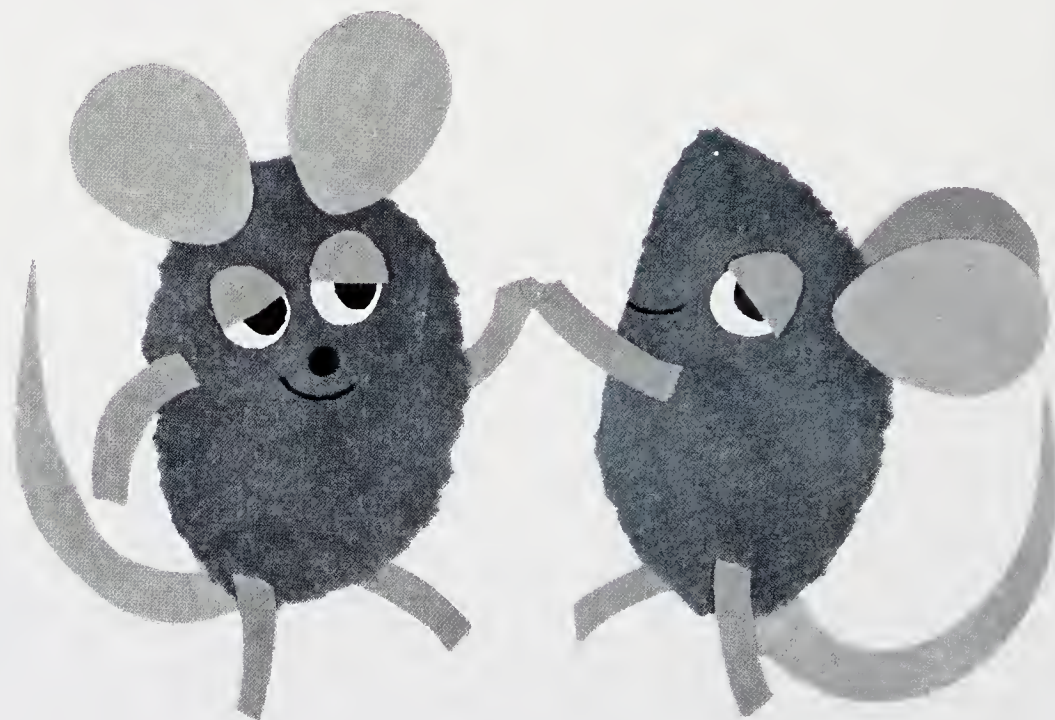
If, in that sense, Frederick, Cornelius, and all the others are *me*, then in the context of this gathering, Swimmy is perhaps the most pertinent example. Little by little, conditioned by the events of his life, he discovers the meaning of beauty as a life-force and finally assumes his role as the eye who sees for the others. "I'll be the eye," he says.

Like Swimmy, the creator of picture books for children has the responsibility to see for the others. He has the power and hence the mission to reveal beauty and meaning. A good picture book should have both.

Come to think of it, would "I as in Eye" have been a better title?



STEVEN HELLER is senior art director for the *New York Times*. He is also editor of the American Institute of Graphic Arts *Journal of Graphic Design*. He has written numerous books on graphic design, illustration, and satiric art, one of the most recent being *Graphic Style: From Victorian to Post-Modern*, written with Seymour Chwast (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1988). Quotations from Leo Lionni in this essay come from conversations and interviews Steven Heller has had with the artist.



Leo Lionni: Many Things to Many People

STEVEN HELLER

For those who read these words, the magisterial name of Leo Lionni is synonymous with *Swimmy*, *Frederick*, and an assortment of other children's book characters who have delighted the senses and stimulated the imagination for over three decades. Through the union of wit and whimsy with art and design, Lionni has developed a distinctive storytelling method with appeal for all ages. What aficionados of his children's tales may not know is that the name Lionni also conjures up many different mental references, including "The Family of Man," *Fortune* magazine, Olivetti, and more, because as a committed teacher, author, critic, editor, painter, sculptor, printmaker, designer, art director, and illustrator, the man behind the name has profoundly contributed for well over half a century to the modern visual language.

Lionni's entry into the picture book field was a fortuitous accident. From the very beginning his books were produced as an avocation while he continued to work as a publishing and advertising art director, as an editor for a national design journal, and as the creator of some extraordinarily mysterious canvases and bronzes. Making his now emblematic cutout-paper pictures was at first merely a means to hold the attention of his restless grandchildren. But this method did not come about serendipitously; Lionni's creative instincts were honed on years of commitment to the principles of modern art. The reductive graphic approach that has mesmerized his many young and old readers is a response to a lifetime conditioning.

Leonard "Leo" Lionni was born in Holland in 1910, into a world on the cusp of world revolution. His father was a craftsman, a diamond cutter, and his mother was a singer whose melodic voice filled his early childhood memories. Her brother, Piet, an architect, allowed five-year-old Leo to play with his drafting tools. And two other uncles, both of them collectors of Modern Art (whose extensive collections are now held by major museums), fed his artistic inclinations by osmosis. For example, one uncle who refused to pay taxes in Holland could only live in the country six months minus one day a year. Hence he stored part of his collection at the Lionni house, including Marc Chagall's *Fiddler*, which hung directly outside the young boy's bedroom.

Shortly after the First World War, Amsterdam was governed by a Socialist party that supported a progressive educational system. "There was great emphasis on nature, art, and crafts," explains Lionni. "In an early grade I was taught to draw from a big plaster cast of an ivory leaf; I remember rendering all of the shading with cross-hatched lines. There was something magical about it. I can still draw that leaf today, and probably not better than I did then." He was also given a permit to draw at the Rijksmuseum, where he copied the plaster casts. But more important, he recalls feeling that "Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Mondriaan, design architecture, even music were one big mood to me. Except for brief periods of partisan enthusiasm, I have denied cultural hierarchies. Ancient is as important as contemporary art. Art is as important as design."

At the age of fourteen Lionni moved with his family to Philadelphia, where his father had a job with the Atlantic Richfield Company. But a year later he was abruptly transplanted to Genoa, Italy. Unable to get admittance into a "classical" high school, which taught Greek, he was enrolled in a "commercial" one, which did not. He learned Italian and became conversant in Italian art, literature, and poetry. At sixteen he discovered the realities of politics through his friendship with Nora Maffi, who later became his wife and lifelong companion. Nora's father was one of the founders of the Italian Communist party and was imprisoned by



the Fascists shortly after their rise to power. Mr. Maffi was later placed under house arrest, guarded by six live-in black shirt policemen. "This was quite a shock to me, having come from a happy Philadelphia school, where I played basketball and went to the prom," says Lionni. "It fell on my head like a bomb, and deeply influenced my thinking."

During this same period Lionni became aware of wanting to become a graphic designer, though the term was not yet used. He created signs for shops and produced his own ad proposals for Campari, which he presented to Mr. Campari personally. But most important he came under the influence of Futurism, a revolutionary movement of painting and applied arts that was then at its zenith. By 1931 Lionni was himself on the crest of the second Futurist wave. He was painting turbulent abstract pictures typical of the era, which had a personality of their own — so much so that he caught the eye of F. T. Marinetti, codifier of the movement, who proclaimed the twenty-one-year-old Lionni to be "A Great Futurist."

Owing to Marinetti's support, Lionni's paintings were exhibited in shows throughout Italy. But his temperament was not really in accord with the chaotic and anarchic aspects of Futurism. He was rather more in tune with the *rationalism* of the Bauhaus. Moreover, he writes, "I am really Dutch. I felt closer to DeStijl, and I responded to the patterns and symmetry of the tulip fields."

After the birth of his two sons, Lionni decided to move his family to Milan, the hotbed of the Italian avant-garde. "We were the first tenants to live in the first rationally designed apartment building in Milan," he recalls. There he made a living doing graphic design, architectural photography, and some advertising with a refugee friend from Germany. The earliest marriage of easel and applied art can be traced to ads that Lionni did for a wool company and to his ad pages for *Domus* magazine. He also began writing architectural criticism for the magazine *Casabella*, where he worked closely with its editor, Eduardo Persico, a fervent anti-Fascist, who had a marked influence on Lionni's design and writing.

Lionni devoted himself to advertising, "simply for the joy of putting good imagery onto pages," he says. Concurrently he also attended classes at the University of Genoa, from which he received a doctoral degree in economics in 1935. He wrote his dissertation on the diamond industry, completing something, he admits, for which he had no real use merely because of his "obsessive necessity" to finish what he started.

Until the mid-thirties the Fascists had not completely shrouded Italian culture with their fanatical ways, but with the enforcement of certain ethnic and racial decrees Lionni, who was ordered to declare whether or not he was Aryan, opted to emigrate to the United States. Returning to Philadelphia, he got a job at N.W. Ayer, one of America's largest advertising agencies. A fortuitous meeting with Charles Coiner, Ayer vice president and art director, marked the beginning of a new career. Coiner arranged for Lionni to do some ads for *Ladies Home Journal* and secured him a position teaching a layout course at the Charles Morris Prince School.

Lionni's big break came in the early 1940s when N.W. Ayer was having a crisis with a new campaign for its multimillion-dollar Ford Motor Company account. Since Ford was unhappy with the new Ayer proposals, the agency invited all the members of the creative pool to work up solutions. Lionni's ads were scrutinized by Edsel Ford himself, and word came back that they were indeed the best. In one week's time Lionni went from a fifty-dollar-a-week assistant to a fifty-dollar-a-week art director for one of the largest accounts in the United States. Offers from prestigious New York agencies followed, but he decided to stay in Philadelphia because, he says, "Where we lived, I could go out at five o'clock in the morning to fish for trout before going to work." Before he left in 1947, he handled some challenging accounts that came his way, including Comptometer, for which he commissioned drawings by Saul Steinberg, and Regal shoes, for which he hired a very young Andy Warhol to do sketches.

As art director for the "International Series," devised by the Container Corporation of America, Lionni returned to Modern Art, commissioning work from William Moore, Willem de Kooning, and Alexander Calder for posters and ads. For one such project Léger, who was then living in New York, was asked to do a color painting. For newspaper reproduction, a black-and-white line version was also needed. Lionni roughly sketched it in line and showed it to Léger as a guide. Upon seeing it, Léger said that the rough was as good as he could have done, and signed Lionni's sketch, which was later printed.

During this time Lionni continued to paint, and he took a year off to study mosaics. But in 1948 he felt restless. There was a subtle difference between being an advertising designer and a graphic designer, and Lionni wanted to become what he called "a general practitioner of the arts." Doing so meant leaving the N.W. Ayer agency, moving to New York, and opening a small office of his own. One of his first calls was to the promotion art director of *Fortune* magazine, whom he had dealt with in the past. They did not have



an advertising assignment, but Lionni learned that the magazine was looking for a new art director. Lionni was not looking for a fulltime job, but he was convinced to take the position on a free-lance basis — three days a week, with an assistant who would go to all the meetings. Thus began Lionni's fourteen-year relationship with Time/Life Inc.

Though Lionni had never designed a magazine before, he says, "it fit me like an old shoe, because I brought everything that I had learned with passion to some kind of concrete manifestation. I employed my rationality in designing its architecture."

From its birth in 1929 *Fortune* was known for the intelligent use of art, both fine and applied. During Lionni's tenure, painters were encouraged to do illustrations and visual essays, and illustrators were commissioned as graphic journalists — not simply to render proscribed imagery but free to draw upon and interpret firsthand experience. Lionni urged artists "to do things which they were not accustomed to doing."

Lionni also consulted with publisher Henry Luce on many Time/Life projects, including design for the prototype of *Sports Illustrated*. As a free-lancer, he continued to work for others, including the Museum of Modern Art, where he designed the catalog for Edward Steichen's seminal photography exhibition "The Family of Man." He was design director for Olivetti, for whom he did advertising, brochures, and environmental and showroom design. In the realm of the third dimension Lionni also designed the American Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. Sponsored by *Fortune* and titled "Unfinished Business," the pavilion he devised was a long tunnel filled with images representing the unsolved problems of American society. Ironically, the exhibit was closed abruptly after a visiting congressman objected to its controversial focus.

During the mid-1950s Lionni was co-editor and art director of *Print* magazine. He elevated mere trade-press writing to graphic design commentary and criticism, offering a platform for various points of view on a variety of subjects. The usual shoptalk was replaced by in-depth reportage of international developments in the applied arts. In *Print* magazine the differences between classicism and modernism were hotly debated. The issues of *Print*

he directed became a tangible sign of Lionni's rationalism in the service of his profession and his art. "I've looked back on those issues," he says proudly, "and they are very civilized."

The idea of creating "civilized and human art" has been Lionni's passion. After all his accomplishments, "I felt the only way I could really reach my goal was by doing painting, sculpture, writing, and graphics the way I wanted to do it." With the exception of the year he had studied mosaics, his professional career had been in the service of others. "Everything I had done was a happy compromise that I've never felt ashamed of in the least," he says. But on his fiftieth birthday he was ready for a radical change. At the peak of his career, Lionni left *Time/Life* and returned to Italy, where life was less expensive. "Everyone thought I was crazy because I had very little money, but it was what I needed to do."

Lionni's fate, however, was not irreparably sealed by a seemingly irrational act; just before he was ready to leave on his new adventure, a remarkable accident took place while he was riding on a commuter train with his grandchildren. To entertain them on the trip, he tore up little bits of colored papers from *Life* magazine and invented a magical story, which became *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (1959). With that Leo Lionni instantly became a picture book author. He now has thirty books and several animated films to his name.

For Lionni, the children's book is an organic synthesis of all his talents, beliefs, and passions, because it unites his senses of humor, color, and abstraction with a desire to teach. In an introduction to Lionni's anthology *Frederick's Fables*, Bruno Bettelheim wrote that Lionni "is an artist who has retained his ability to think primarily in images, and who can create true picture books. . . . It is the true genius of the artist which permits him to create picture images that convey much deeper meaning than what is overtly depicted."

Despite his resolution to devote himself to painting and sculpture, Lionni agreed when *Time/Life* asked him to become editor of the new Italian general interest magazine *Panorama*. He enjoyed the opportunity to publish some extraordinary journalism. Yet the position was fraught with "political" problems from the outset. "Mondadori [who copublished the magazine with *Time/Life*] could not understand why an *impaginatore* (layout man) was installed as the editor of an important magazine," recalls Lionni about the fact that after a year and a half he was replaced, the American collaboration ceased, and the magazine was turned into a weekly.

From that time on, Lionni has taken full advantage of his freedom. He and Nora live in the Tuscan hills at least six months of the year. There he continues to expand the limits of children's book illustration and explores the natural world through his biomorphic drawings and sculpture. In recent years he has cast in bronze a garden of exotic, imaginary flora. In 1977 he published *Parallel Botany*, a satiric documentary account of his bizarre horticultural discoveries.

As in a tapestry, the fragments of Leo Lionni's varied career are each distinct, yet together form an impressive, single piece. As art director for N.W. Ayer, he married painterly art and illustration; as co-editor of *Print*, he elevated the level of design discourse; as art director of *Fortune* he launched the careers of many visual artists; and as children's book author and artist, he has captured the minds and hearts of several generations. Today his graphic work is enlivened by a youthful innocence and sagelike logic, cut with urbane humor. In word and deed Lionni has been an unfaltering rationalist, a devout humanist, and a passionate artist.



SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY: Books by Leo Lionni

- Little Blue and Little Yellow.* New York: Obolensky, 1959.
- Inch by Inch.* New York: Obolensky, 1960.
- On My Beach There Are Many Pebbles.* New York: Obolensky, 1961.
- Swimmy.* New York: Pantheon, 1963.
- Tico and the Golden Wings.* New York: Pantheon, 1964.
- Frederick.* New York: Pantheon, 1967.
- The Biggest House in the World.* New York: Pantheon, 1968.
- The Alphabet Tree.* New York: Pantheon, 1968.
- Alexander and the Wind-up Mouse.* New York: Pantheon, 1969.
- Fish Is Fish.* New York: Pantheon, 1970.
- Theodore and the Talking Mushroom.* New York: Pantheon, 1971.
- The Greentail Mouse.* New York: Pantheon, 1973.
- Pezzettino.* New York: Pantheon, 1975.
- In the Rabbitgarden.* New York: Pantheon, 1975.
- A Color of His Own.* New York: Pantheon, 1976.
- A Flea Story.* New York: Pantheon, 1977.
- Parallel Botany.* New York: Knopf, 1978.
- Geraldine, the Music Mouse.* New York: Pantheon, 1979.
- Let's Make Rabbits.* New York: Pantheon, 1982.
- Cornelius.* New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- Who?; Where?; What?; and When?* New York: Pantheon, 1983.
- Frederick's Fables.* With a foreword by Bruno Bettelheim. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Colors; Letters; Numbers; and Words.* New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- It's Mine.* New York: Pantheon, 1986.
- Nicolas, Where Have You Been?* New York: Knopf, 1987.
- Six Crows.* New York: Knopf, 1988.
- Tillie and the Wall.* New York: Knopf, 1989.
- Matthew's Dream.* New York: Knopf, 1990.
- A Busy Year.* New York: Knopf, 1992.
- Mr. McMouse.* New York: Knopf, 1992.

Illustrations for this publication come from the following books
by Leo Lionni:

Cover: *Six Crows* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1988)

Pp. 2-3, 9: *Who?* (Pantheon Books, 1983)

P. 6: *Theodore and the Talking Mushroom* (Pantheon Books, 1971)

P. 8: *What?* (Pantheon Books, 1983)

Pp. 16, 18: *Alexander and the Wind-up Mouse* (Pantheon Books, 1969)

Pp. 10, 13, 17, 20, 23: *A Color of His Own* (Pantheon Books, 1976)

Pp. 12, 14, 15, 25: *Fish Is Fish* (Pantheon Books, 1970)

P. 27: *It's Mine!* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986)

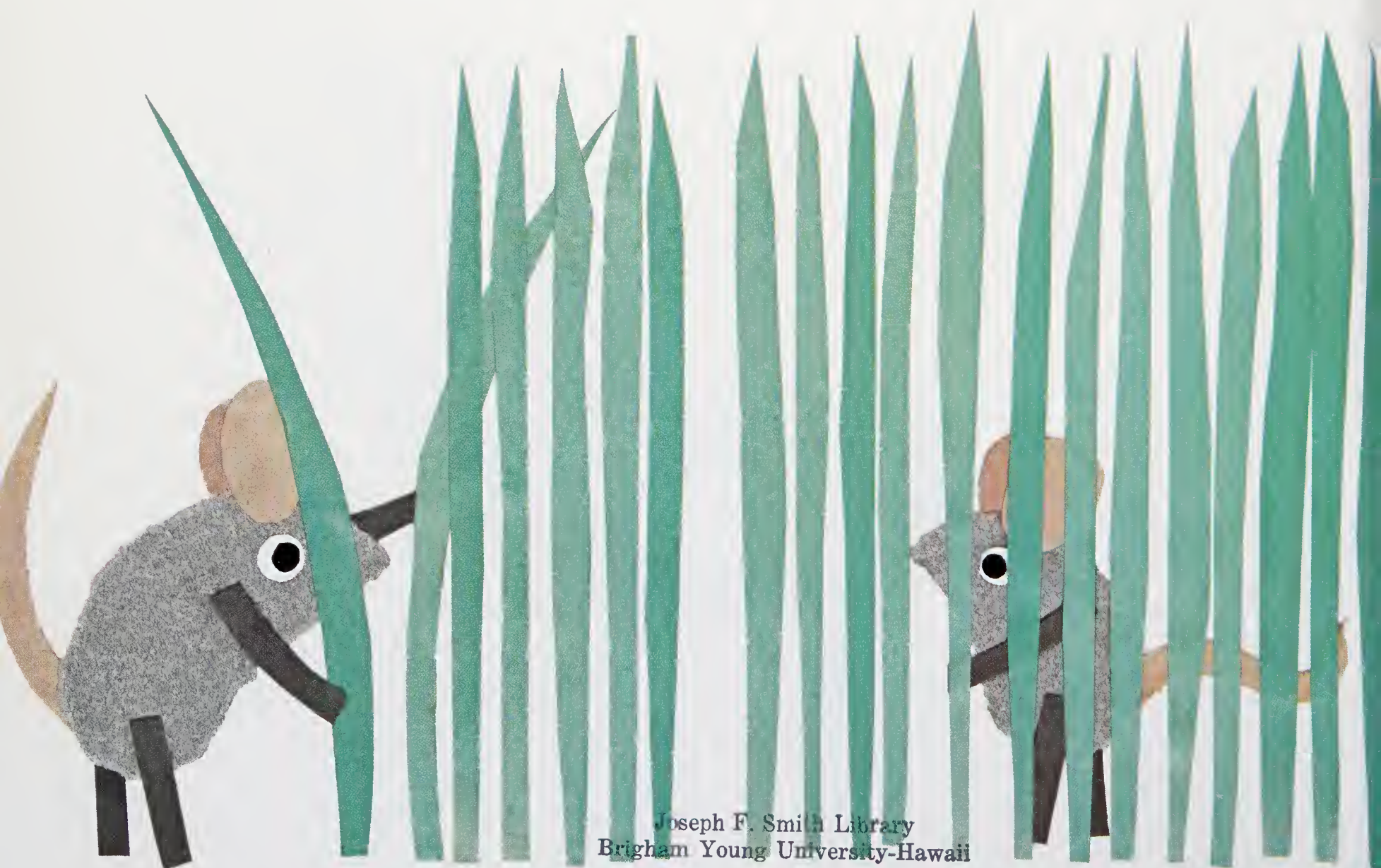
P. 28: *Where?* (Pantheon Books, 1983)

P. 1: "Mouse with Microphone" was designed by Leo Lionni
for the Children's Literature Center and is reproduced
with his kind permission.



Colophon

Composition in Old Face Open, Baskerville, and Bulmer by Acorn Press,
Rockville, Maryland, and General Typographers, Washington, D.C.
Graphic design by John Michael, Rockville, Maryland.



Joseph F. Smith Library
Brigham Young University-Hawaii

1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37
 38
 39
 40
 41
 42
 43
 44
 45
 46
 47
 48
 49
 50
 51
 52
 53
 54
 55
 56
 57
 58
 59
 60
 61
 62
 63
 64
 65
 66
 67
 68
 69
 70
 71
 72
 73
 74
 75
 76
 77
 78
 79
 80
 81
 82
 83
 84
 85
 86
 87
 88
 89
 90
 91
 92
 93
 94
 95
 96
 97
 98
 99
 100
 101
 102
 103
 104
 105
 106
 107
 108
 109
 110
 111
 112
 113
 114
 115
 116
 117
 118
 119
 120
 121
 122
 123
 124
 125
 126
 127
 128
 129
 130
 131
 132
 133
 134
 135
 136
 137
 138
 139
 140
 141
 142
 143
 144
 145
 146
 147
 148
 149
 150
 151
 152
 153
 154
 155
 156
 157
 158
 159
 160
 161
 162
 163
 164
 165
 166
 167
 168
 169
 170
 171
 172
 173
 174
 175
 176
 177
 178
 179
 180
 181
 182
 183
 184
 185
 186
 187
 188
 189
 190
 191
 192
 193
 194
 195
 196
 197
 198
 199
 200
 201
 202
 203
 204
 205
 206
 207
 208
 209
 210
 211
 212
 213
 214
 215
 216
 217
 218
 219
 220
 221
 222
 223
 224
 225
 226
 227
 228
 229
 230
 231
 232
 233
 234
 235
 236
 237
 238
 239
 240
 241
 242
 243
 244
 245
 246
 247
 248
 249
 250
 251
 252
 253
 254
 255
 256
 257
 258
 259
 260
 261
 262
 263
 264
 265
 266
 267
 268
 269
 270
 271
 272
 273
 274
 275
 276
 277
 278
 279
 280
 281
 282
 283
 284
 285
 286
 287
 288
 289
 290
 291
 292
 293
 294
 295
 296
 297
 298
 299
 300
 301
 302
 303
 304
 305
 306
 307
 308
 309
 310
 311
 312
 313
 314
 315
 316
 317
 318
 319
 320
 321
 322
 323
 324
 325
 326
 327
 328
 329
 330
 331
 332
 333
 334
 335
 336
 337
 338
 339
 340
 341
 342
 343
 344
 345
 346
 347
 348
 349
 350
 351
 352
 353
 354
 355
 356
 357
 358
 359
 360
 361
 362
 363
 364
 365
 366
 367
 368
 369
 370
 371
 372
 373
 374
 375
 376
 377
 378
 379
 380
 381
 382
 383
 384
 385
 386
 387
 388
 389
 390
 391
 392
 393
 394
 395
 396
 397
 398
 399
 400
 401
 402
 403
 404
 405
 406
 407
 408
 409
 410
 411
 412
 413
 414
 415
 416
 417
 418
 419
 420
 421
 422
 423
 424
 425
 426
 427
 428
 429
 430
 431
 432
 433
 434
 435
 436
 437
 438
 439
 440
 441
 442
 443
 444
 445
 446
 447
 448
 449
 450
 451
 452
 453
 454
 455
 456
 457
 458
 459
 460
 461
 462
 463
 464
 465
 466
 467
 468
 469
 470
 471
 472
 473
 474
 475
 476
 477
 478
 479
 480
 481
 482
 483
 484
 485
 486
 487
 488
 489
 490
 491
 492
 493
 494
 495
 496
 497
 498
 499
 500
 501
 502
 503
 504
 505
 506
 507
 508
 509
 510
 511
 512
 513
 514
 515
 516
 517
 518
 519
 520
 521
 522
 523
 524
 525

DUE DATE

[illegible]

780160416712



9 780160 416712



UA-6222-041